



VIRUS GROWTH SHOWS SYSTEM FAILURE

BRITAIN ON BRINK OF NEW WAVE AS TESTING FAILS >>PAGE 3 ENGLAND HAS HIGHEST DEATH TOLL IN EUROPE >>PAGE 5 SHIELDERS SACRIFICED TO GOD OF PROFIT >>PAGE 4




Socialist Worker

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THE TORIES CLAPPED, BUT NOW WON'T PAY NHS WORKERS. LET'S...

SLAP THEM BACK



FOOD AND DIET

Don't blame the poor for obesity and hunger

THE TORIES claim to be fighting obesity with a series of new measures that are aimed at encouraging people to lose weight. Apart from being a shameless attempt to divert attention from their own coronavirus failings, the programme won't work. It ignores social factors.

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RACISM



Racism in schools and police exposed

FIGURES FROM London's Metropolitan Police showed they were nearly four times more likely to use force on black people than white people. And in some parts of England, black pupils are excluded at a rate three times higher than white pupils.

>>Page 7

RAVES

Why right wingers want to break up our parties

WHEN PEOPLE gather "unofficially" to dance or party they regularly face harassment and arrests. Previous examples show why the state doesn't like large gatherings it can't control—and uses its instruments of repression against them.

>>Pages 14&15

Join demos on Sat 8 Aug ● Health workers—'We've had enough!' >>Pages 10&11



THE THINGS THEY SAY

'Cycling is very Remain and Lib Dem'

Tory minister moans about the government's allegedly pro-bike policy

'How about we not spend this money? We are a Conservative government after all'

Another Tory minister makes clear they don't like bikes

'Tougher enforcement against Gypsy travellers'

How Douglas Ross, tipped to be the next Scottish Tory leader, answered the question "What would you do if you were Prime Minister for a day?"

'I am not seeking nomination to the House of Lords'

Former union leader Lord Tony Woodley in 2018

'We all have to die sooner or later. If I get Covid and cop it, so be it. I certainly don't expect the entire nation to bankrupt itself to save my sorry ass'

Daily Mail columnist Sarah Vine on coronavirus.



When Labour leader Starmer stood up for Palestinian rights

IN 2019 the vile slur was spread that the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) is antisemitic.

After some alleged PSC members were accused of antisemitic social media posts, the then Labour leader was told he must have no dealings with the group.

Amanda Bowman, vice president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, said, "Jeremy Corbyn must now publicly disassociate himself from this malevolent group."

But he's not the only Labour leader who, quite rightly, has supported PSC and its events.

In 2015 the Camden branch of PSC in north London held an election hustings.

Sabby Sagall, chair of Camden PSC, filed a report



KEIR STARMER joined a Palestine solidarity event in 2015

for Socialist Worker. He said, "Some 70 people attended a public meeting on Palestine on Wednesday of last week, organised by Camden PSC."

Speakers included retiring local Labour MP Frank Dobson, Green Party leader and local candidate Natalie Bennett and local Labour

candidate Keir Starmer. Also on the platform was John Rose, author of The Myths of Zionism, who reported Sabby Sagall, "Stressed the importance of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions strategy."

Local newspaper the Ham & High headlined its report,

"General election candidates urged to support sanctions against Israel".

It said, "The talk launched the Palestine Solidarity Campaign group's 'Vote Palestine' initiative, with the group saying, 'It is urgent that our politicians support actions—not just words—to secure Palestinian rights'."

When he stood for leader this year Starmer's campaign launch video implied support for the Palestinian cause.

He urged, "We can promote peace and justice around the world" against the backdrop of Stop the War campaigners holding Palestinian flags.

But he has now changed his tune as he tries to show a break from Corbyn and Palestine activists.

Remember Camden in 2015, Starmer?

A NEW study reveals that the amount of money you have could impact on how much sleep you get each night. Researchers found that 55 percent of those living below the poverty line reported resting for a full seven to eight hours a night compared to 67 percent of adults that make 400 percent more than the poverty threshold.

Can the super-rich sleep at night? They surely can.



Who gets the cream?

THE GOVERNMENT has agreed to pay just 21 families the £60,000 lump sum promised to all those who lost a relative to coronavirus while working in the NHS and social care.

Health secretary Matt Hancock made the pledge in April. But despite more than 300 health and care workers having died after contracting the virus, just 21 claims have been successful. Payouts have been made in just two cases.

Handout for Maximus, the benefits assessor

MAXIMUS, THE firm that assesses benefit claimants, is getting a government bailout to see it through hard times due to coronavirus.

News of this taxpayer generosity is revealed in part of its latest accounts.

These same accounts show the firm has been paying tens of millions of pounds to its US parent company in dividends over the past four years.

Maximus UK took on the contract to run the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) work capability assessments in 2015.

Since then the tidy sum of £56.8 million has been paid out in dividends.



Campaigning against Maximus

The contract would have run out this February but former DWP secretary Amber Rudd extended it until July 2021.

Now Maximus is to receive a revised payment model to "support" the company while most of its DWP-funded testing is suspended.

Unfortunately claimants don't receive such treatment.

Property boss opens wallet for the Tories

MAYFAIR property tycoon Jamie Reuben has become one of the Tories' most significant donors, with £586,250 given to the party since Boris Johnson became leader.

Private Eye magazine reports that Jamie, who works with his billionaire father David and uncle Simon Reuben, was once a regular donor.

But he hadn't given anything for the past seven years. That changed on 9 October last year when he donated £200,000. It was followed by £248,000 in November, £123,750 in January this year and



Reuben and friend

£12,000 in March. What sparked this sudden bout of generosity is not clear.

But two days before the cash started flowing, on 7 October 2019, the then planning minister Esther McVey attended a meeting with Reuben Brothers. The purpose, as recorded by McVey, was "to discuss modern methods of construction".

Johnson's lies about poverty

BORIS Johnson has repeatedly made "incorrect" claims about the level of child poverty under the Tories, the country's statistics watchdog has found.

The body has concluded that the prime minister's main suggestion—that the number of children in poverty had fallen by 400,000 since 2010—was inaccurate. It says it was one of several inaccurate statements on the issue since December.

It also found that his line in Prime Minister's Question Time last month that "absolute poverty and relative poverty have both declined under this



More children are in poverty

government" was similarly untrue. The following week, when Johnson was challenged, he made a further incorrect statement.

The new claim—that "there are 100,000 fewer children in absolute poverty and 500,000 children falling below thresholds of low income and material deprivation" was also wrong.

The watchdog found that the number in absolute poverty had fallen by 100,000, not 400,000, since 2010.

And the number below the poverty line is not 500,000—it is 1.5 million.

And since 2010-11 the number of children in relative poverty has actually gone up by 500,000.

Tory abuser's voting record

THE Conservative ex-MP Charlie Elphicke was last week found guilty of three counts of sexual assault against two women.

When the accusations first emerged in 2017 he was suspended from the parliamentary Tory party.

But at the end of 2018 Theresa May faced a vote of no confidence.

The decision was made to reinstate the Tory whip to Elphicke which enabled him to vote.

"I remain as confident as I always have been of clearing my name," he told constituents.

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Tories' dodgy tests will only spell more misery

by SARAH BATES

THE GOVERNMENT is suggesting a second Covid-19 wave is about to hit Britain—but they aren't doing nearly enough to prepare properly for a new onslaught.

With a large part of northern England now back under strict measures, Boris Johnson is reported to be considering a new lockdown regime for the whole country.

He was forced to back off from further easing social distancing measures last Friday.

Services such as nail bars and bowling alleys were due to reopen their doors on Saturday but permission was dramatically pulled at the eleventh hour.

Johnson and chancellor Rishi Sunak met to discuss options for a second lockdown, as the number of infections rose.

The Sunday Times reported that the pair considered extending the shielding programme to all those between the ages of 50 and 70.

Seriously

The Tories claim to be taking Covid-19 testing seriously and will introduce two new tests for Covid-19 that can deliver results within 90 minutes across hospitals and care homes.

Yet no evaluation data has been published on these two new tests and experts warn that the government could be buying faulty equipment.

"Repeatedly through the pandemic the government has raced ahead purchasing tests on the basis of manufacturer's claims," said Professor Jon Deeks from Birmingham University.

"And they have found later when independent studies are done that the tests do not have adequate performance for use in the NHS."

Deeks, who is part of a team evaluating tests said, "The mistakes



TORY MISHANDLING of the virus gets worse by the week—no wonder health workers are nervous

made in test purchasing have wasted millions of pounds as well as put lives at risk."

The Department for Health and Social Care said one of the new Covid-19 tests will be used across NHS hospitals from September and provided by firm DnaNudge.

The other contract, provided by the Oxford Nanopore company, is due to release 450,000 tests.

But Deeks said the tests were simply too unknown to be counted on.

"We cannot emphasise how important it is to see independent

evaluations of all tests before they are implemented."

The Tories had previously promised to rollout testing kits across care homes this month.

But local authorities learnt last Friday that the scheme was being delayed for weeks—until at least 7 September. This leaves hundreds of thousands of care home residents suffering from five months of social isolation and unable to receive visitors.

And care home managers are reporting that they still can't get hold of "regular" tests. Provider Care UK

said it was finding it "increasingly difficult to access" testing. Nadra Ahmed, executive chair of the National Care Association, called the government delays "disgraceful".

"To all the relatives who have been told they can go and visit now safely, how do we do that?"

The Tories don't care about care home residents—they have let the virus run rampant through adult social care settings for months.

Their latest half-hearted attempts at controlling the catastrophe will only lead to more misery.



Care home residents sacrificed

CARE HOMES in England and their older residents were "thrown to the wolves" during the coronavirus crisis, according to a scathing parliamentary report.

Matt Hancock, the health secretary, claimed that the government had "thrown a protective ring around care homes".

But the MPs' report shows that's a lie.

Almost 20,000 care home residents died with confirmed or suspected coronavirus between 2 March and 12 June.

The committee said the crisis revealed the "tragic impact" of delays by successive governments to reform the social care sector, which has been subject to years of underfunding.

The committee said the government had "squandered" the opportunity to build up supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks and gloves in January and February, and changed the guidance on PPE in care homes 40 times—"leading to confusion".

Volunteers

The changes seemed to be based on what the system could cope with, rather than clinical advice and "what was right" and without taking into account the "reality on the ground," the MPs found.

Meg Hillier MP, the Labour chair of the committee, said, "The failure to provide adequate PPE or testing to the millions of staff and volunteers who risked their lives to help us through the first peak of the crisis is a sad, low moment in our national response."

"Our care homes were effectively thrown to the wolves, and the virus has ravaged some of them."

She also criticised the "bold and ambitious claims made by ministers about the roll out of test, track and trace that don't match the reality" the lack of which meant that "vulnerable people surviving the first wave have been isolated for months."

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- Send 'start' to the number

Firms still give to the rich

BRITISH COMPANIES have said in recent weeks that they will pay out more than £1 billion of dividend payments to shareholders.

BAE Systems last week announced it would start paying dividends again, worth about £300 million.

Packaging group Smurfit Kappa and property company Land Securities followed with similar boosts for the rich.

Analysis by Peel Hunt investment bankers suggests about 27 companies that cancelled dividends during the first half of the year are likely to restore payouts later

in 2020. In total, about £25 billion of dividends are still pending before the end of the year across more than 150 of the top 350 companies.

Russ Mould, investment director at stockbroker AJ Bell, said the return of companies

such as BAE, Smurfit and Land Securities to the dividend list "offers income-seekers some grounds for hope".

Dividend payments go overwhelmingly to people who are already very rich.

They are the ultimate form of unearned income.





Disastrous Tory policy endangers shielders

Government ministers have ‘paused’ a vital measure to protect the most vulnerable—without any evidence

SHIELDERS—PEOPLE advised to take extra precautions during the coronavirus outbreak—fear for their jobs and safety after the government “paused” shielding advice.

Many shielders—who were advised to stay at home—say the pause, combined with the easing of lockdown, is putting their health at risk.

Liz was advised to go into shielding with her wife, who she cares for, at the start of lockdown. She says the easing of lockdown has made everyday life riskier and more difficult.

“I was told by specialists at the beginning of shielding, ‘your wife will most probably die if she catches this virus’.

“Since the end of June when the government started to encourage those shielding to get out of the home more it’s become harder and harder to social distance, and there has been less help on offer,” she told Socialist Worker.

“We were—and still are—reliant on volunteers and services to do shopping and collect prescriptions and such like.”

Paused

She added, “Ultimately, like many other shielders, we feel that the advice given by the government is vague, unhelpful and isn’t understood by the general population.

“We don’t understand why shielding is being paused whilst the numbers of those testing positive rise.”

The pause also means that many shielders will now be pressured to return to work, putting them at risk.

Daniel, a support worker, says he had been furloughed—but was asked to go back to work almost as soon as the pause was announced.

“I got an email on Thursday telling me my furlough ends on Friday,” he told Socialist Worker.

“It said something like, ‘We are happy to announce your



People shielding are still at high risk

furlough will be ending.’ It said they appreciate we may be anxious, but they have things in place to protect us.

“It also said we could have phased return to work using our annual leave. Yeah, thanks for that.”

He added, “Some of the people we work with aren’t often able to take care of things for themselves.

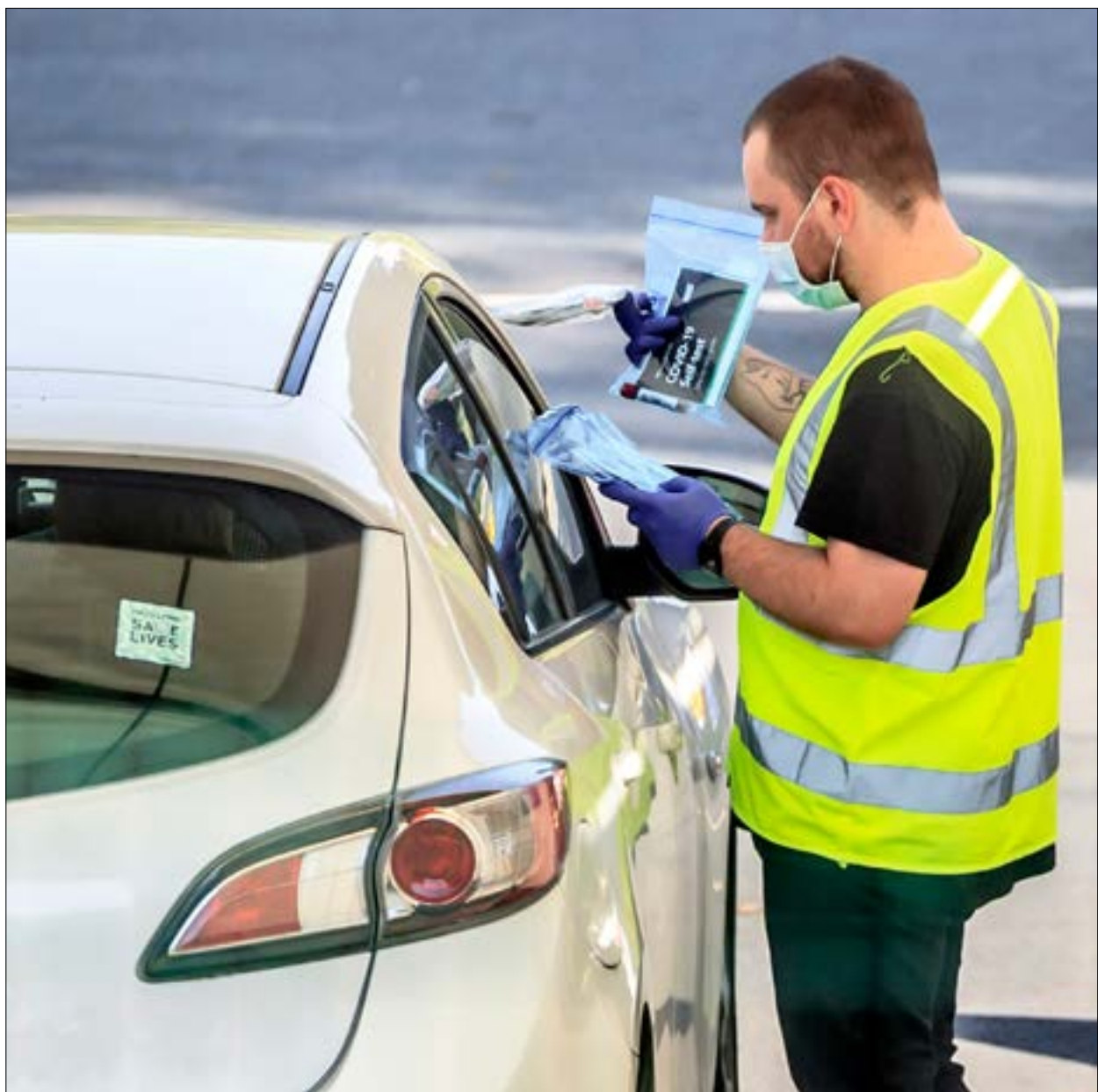
So I don’t see how they can put things in place to keep us safe if they’ve got Covid-19. It’s really quite worrying.

Daniel said the pause has forced him to have to choose between keeping his job, or keeping safe.

“I’m thinking of refusing to go back. But they’ll probably terminate my employment or just refuse to pay me.

“It was a battle to get myself on the furlough scheme in the first place. Now they’re saying they can’t justify keeping me on furlough because shielding has been paused.

“I could try and find a job where I work from home but it’s difficult at the moment. Do I keep working and risk my health, or refuse to work and put myself at economic risk?



TESTING FOR Covid-19 in Bradford, West Yorkshire

Pic: PA

Local lockdowns used as racist bid to shift virus second wave blame

THE TORIES are trying to blame ordinary people and scapegoat Muslims for the failures to stop the spread of coronavirus.

Health secretary Matt Hancock announced a series of “local lockdowns” across Greater Manchester, East Lancashire and parts of West Yorkshire last week.

It came directly ahead of Muslim’s Eid celebrations.

People are not be able to visit other families inside their homes or in private gardens. But they can go to pubs, restaurants and other hospitality outlets.

The Tories—as a favour to big business interests—have pushed for lifting the national lockdown before it is safe in order to get profits flowing again.

So the Tory solution is to blame individual behaviour and minorities ahead of a possible second wave.

Tory MP for the Calder Valley, Craig Whittaker, singled out the “immigrant and Asian population” for the spread of the virus.

Speaking on the LBC radio show, Whittaker said, “What I have seen



Tory Whittaker blames Muslims

sorts of excuses,” he told Socialist Worker.

In Manchester, Labour councillor and executive member for neighbourhoods Rabnawaz Akbar said Whittaker’s statement was playing with “gutter politics” and “fuels racism”.

“I’ve been in the mosque all morning,” he told Socialist Worker. “People were all initially disappointed about it.

“We were in complete lockdown during the last Eid and people were looking forward to seeing people outside of their bubble.

Mohammed says he is “really baffled” by arguments blaming Muslims. “Our mosques and community centres have taken so many precautions,” he explained. “We have an online booking system to come to the mosque.

“People bring their own prayer mats, they sit in a specific place, and all mosques have markings on the floor.”

Activists have to stand in unity against racist arguments—and say we need to put health and lives before profit.



XPO logistics firm has been blasted for poor health and safety

Warnings at company at heart of Covid-19 spike

A LOGISTICS firm at the centre of a spike of coronavirus was slammed for poor health and safety at the beginning of the crisis.

At least 51 workers at an Iceland food distribution centre, run by XPO Logistics, in Swindon have tested positive for the virus.

The Wiltshire town has the tenth highest infection rate in Britain with 24.4 cases per 100,000 people, just behind Manchester’s rate of 24.5.

A spokesperson for XPO Logistics said that “protecting our employees is our number one priority”.

In March the GMB union had raised concerns about workers at XPO’s warehouses in Milton

Keynes. The union said working practices “clearly run counter to the government’s structures around social distancing”.

Richard Owen, a GMB regional officer, said, “Although some measures of social distancing have been introduced in communal areas, some workers are being forced to work in close proximity to each other within the restrictive confines of the picking areas.

“I wrote to the company, expressing dismay at the company’s continuing commitment to keeping the warehouses running while not complying with the social distancing requirements.

“The attitude of

‘We’ll keep going until we’re ordered not to’ is completely irresponsible, and puts everyone at risk.”

The union argued that workers should have been furloughed.

XPO runs two warehouses near Milton Keynes—LVMH which processes orders for retailers of cosmetics and Marston Gate which handles Adidas sportswear and shoes.

The spread of the virus at the Swindon warehouse shows the dangers of working during the pandemic.

There should be no return to work until it’s safe and all those doing essential work should have proper protective kit and health and safety measures in the workplace.

England leads death chart

ENGLAND has had “the longest continuous period of excess mortality” and “the highest levels of excess mortality” in Europe.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures released on Thursday looked at 29 European countries—and showed the appalling result of the Tories’ failures.

Excess mortality is a measure of how many more people than usual died during a given period. The ONS says that this is the “best way of comparing the

mortality impact internationally”.

Dr Veena Raleigh, senior fellow at The King’s Fund health charity, said, “Over the past decade, life expectancy improvements in the UK have lagged behind our European peers.

Risk

With the worst coronavirus death toll in Europe, there is a very real risk that the UK will slide even further down the life expectancy league tables.”

The ONS study also looked at different

nations within Britain and found that England has the worst record followed by Scotland, then Wales.

Scotland had the third worst rate of excess deaths in Europe. And among the population aged 64 and under, Scotland’s excess deaths’ rate put it second only to England.

The statistics cover the first half of 2020, from January until June. The gap between Britain and other countries could be starker once later months are taken into account.

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WHAT WE THINK

NHS PROTESTS POINT THE WAY TO WIN CHANGE

THE NHS workers’ pay revolt is hugely welcome. It shows how there is real anger in society and working class fury can explode unexpectedly, often outside the official channels of the labour movement.

Millions are looking for a focus to force a reckoning with the Tories.

Health workers have been frustrated about stagnating pay for over a decade.

But the Tory refusal to give them a pay rise after working throughout the pandemic has ignited a fightback.

People who have never been involved in politics or unions before organised protests across Britain for this Saturday.

It’s another inspiring example of how recent resistance has come from the streets and workplaces—not from the Labour Party or union leaders.

Some NHS workers at the forefront of the revolt have learnt from the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement.

BLM mobilised tens of thousands of people onto the streets in the wake of George Floyd’s murder. Protests happened

in more than 200 places across Britain throughout May and June, including in small towns that haven’t had one in many years.

BLM has done more to challenge racism than decades of official inquiries and reviews.

Before the coronavirus crisis hit, millions of people worldwide took to the streets over climate chaos.

In Britain school students walked out and Extinction Rebellion activists shut down parts of London during its rebellions.

The global climate strike on 20 September 2019 was the largest worldwide day of action since the demonstrations against the

invasion of Iraq on 15 February 2003.

Meanwhile, Labour is not only absent from the movements, it is actively distancing itself from any resistance.

Sir Keir Starmer has made clear he will bend his knee to big business.

He has given no opposition to an unsafe return to work.

When the NEU union led a campaign against a wider reopening of schools in June, Starmer ensured Labour didn’t fully back them.

The coronavirus crisis has shown us that its workers—not billionaires—who create wealth and keep society going.

And this gives workers immense power to strike and shut down the Tories’ and bosses’ system.

Everyone should take the lead of the health workers, take to the streets on Saturday, and build the resistance.

And afterwards the networks of revolt need to grow and step up the pressure for more protests, action in workplaces, and strikes.

This Saturday has to be a launch pad for more resistance.

“Labour is not only absent from the movements—it is distancing itself from resistance

WE CAN STILL FIGHT ISRAEL

DESPITE A huge assault on the right to stand with Palestine, it’s still possible to win victories.

The University of Manchester has withdrawn more than £3 million of investment from companies complicit in Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land.

The divestment followed a campaign by students in solidarity with Palestinians.

The university revealed that it divested from Caterpillar and the parent company of Booking.com

some time between April 2019 and 31 March 2020.

Caterpillar supplies bulldozers to the Israeli army, which are used to demolish Palestinian homes. Booking.com lists rental properties in Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian West Bank.

Though the university denied that the divestment was connected to the campaign, its information officer did cite its ethical investment guidelines when revealing the decision.

The divestment comes amid

attempts to silence solidarity with Palestine and campaigns against Israel. Claims that boycott and divestment campaigns are antisemitic are part of a broader assault on the left that has had a chilling effect on Palestine solidarity.

Boycott campaigns are legitimate. They target Israel for its abuse of Palestinians, not because it’s Jewish, and they stand in a proud tradition of international solidarity campaigns.

What’s more, they can still win.

Breakfast in

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ANALYSIS

NICK CLARK



What are the roots of antisemitism?

ANTISEMITISM BELONGS to the right. That's a simple and straightforward fact. But it's an important argument in the face of attempts to cast the whole of left wing politics as tarnished with antisemitism.

There are growing claims that the left's opposition to Israel, to war, and to the rich are rooted in old antisemitic conspiracy theories.

That's galling because such antisemitism—which says Jewish people conspire to dominate governments and finance—has always been poison to real left wing politics.

It's always been used to shift blame and anger away from those at the top—who aren't all united by race, nationality or religion—and onto Jews.

Antisemitism can be traced back to a much older persecution of Jewish people. Before capitalism, European monarchs used Christianity to justify their rule and, during the Middle Ages, their crusades against Muslim countries.

It was a rigid system where everyone had their place. Kings and lords ruled by divine right, and serfs and peasants worked the land. Those who didn't follow Christianity were pushed to the margins, and for Jewish people that often meant into the role of merchants and traders.

A few prospered from trade between countries and became rich enough to lend money to rulers and monarchs. But generally Jews made a living as small time traders.

It was a vulnerable position that left them open to sporadic persecution and scapegoating from the top, and resentment by those at the bottom.

The crucial difference between that persecution and the antisemitism of today is that it was about religion—it didn't cast Jewish people as a distinct, separate race.

That changed after the development of capitalist society, when antisemitism emerged to play a specific role.

Jews were picked on as scapegoats for a number of crises that hit capitalist societies in the late 1800s. They were blamed for the economic crisis of the 1870s, defeats in wars and for the growth of workers' movements.

For the first time Jews began to be attacked as a "race."

Enemy

"Scientific" notions of race had been developed to justify the slave trade that fuelled the growth of capitalism. Now antisemitic writers began to talk about Jewish people as a distinct race—an external enemy that threatened society and could never assimilate even through conversion to Christianity.

The economic position Jews had been pushed into and anti-Jewish religious myths were turned into the basis for antisemitic tropes.

Writers and politicians across Europe pushed antisemitic ideas. In France, Jewish military officer Alfred Dreyfus was framed for spying in 1894, with antisemites leading the charge against him. In Poland and Russia, Jewish people were made scapegoats for poverty, and were victims of horrific state-organised pogroms.

The antisemitic forgery, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, purported to be the minutes of a conference where Jews conspired to dominate the world. It was printed across Europe and the US, including by car manufacturer Henry Ford.

This racialised hatred of Jews was used to scapegoat Jewish people throughout the twentieth century. It was adopted by the Nazis as the ideology that held them together and drove their movement forward and ultimately towards the Holocaust.

It's still integral to fascist and far right ideology today. The antisemitic Hungarian government of Viktor Orban pushes antisemitic conspiracy theories. Far right supporters of Donald Trump marched in 2017 chanting "Jews will not replace us".

An important point is that antisemitism has always been deliberately an alternative to left wing ideas.

Antisemitism often tries to appeal as a challenge to the system. Ultimately it works in its defence.

Socialists' critique of capitalism blames a system of economic exploitation by those at the top of society—who don't all share a race or religion—over the vast majority of people. That doesn't mean that antisemitic ideas never appear among left wing people.

But the more someone blames Jews, the further they are from the socialist argument. Antisemitism isn't a product of left wing politics. It's a diversion from it.



CLEANERS IN Liverpool and Bootle during a previous strike (above and below)

Tax office cleaners launch walkouts to win living wage

CLEANERS AT HMRC tax offices in Liverpool and Bootle began a four week strike on Monday—part of a long-running battle for a living wage.

The workers have already struck for 19 days since the dispute began in 2019. But now it has become a fight for justice for those who have been made to keep working during the coronavirus crisis.

The PCS union members are demanding that bosses at outsourcer ISS pay them a living wage of £10 an hour.

They also want full occupational sick pay, the same annual leave as the civil service workers they work alongside, and job security guarantees in the event of office closures.

Wage

Now, after being treated as key workers throughout the coronavirus crisis, they are furious they still aren't paid a living wage.

Striker Maria told Socialist Worker, "We've all been coming in during the coronavirus."

"It's been horrible. Some of us have been able to walk in, but I've been having to get the bus every day."

Despite having to work, the outsourced cleaners still aren't paid the same as civil service workers they work alongside, and aren't entitled to the same sick pay either.

Maria said, "They haven't

furloughed anyone. One of the cleaners had to take time off as her son had cancer, but didn't get any sick pay. She wasn't entitled to anything as she wasn't ill."

So far neither bosses at ISS or HMRC want to put their hands in their pockets to give the lowest paid workers a wage increase.

ISS says HMRC would have to fund the increase. But HMRC says the outsourced workers are ISS's responsibility.

The PCS is demanding that bosses at HMRC provide the funding. It says that most



government departments have provided funding for outsourced workers to receive full pay if they are absent during the coronavirus crisis.

It said this showed HMRC is able to fund a pay rise and that "the decision to block funding is a purely political decision."

It also pointed to a victory by outsourced workers at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy last year.

Now strikers hope a four week strike will break the deadlock.

"It's our longest strike," said Maria. "But no one hesitated. Everyone was up for it."

The workers are planning a series of events as part of the month long strike, including an online strike rally on Wednesday of this week.

And they are asking supporters to join in a messaging campaign to HMRC chief executive Jim Harra.

HMRC bosses have relied on cleaners to keep things running during the coronavirus crisis. Every trade unionist should do what they can to support the strikers' fight.

Messages of support to RCGroup@pcs.org.uk Go to bit.ly/JimHarraMegaphone to send a message to chief executive Jim Harra. Donate to the strike fund. Account name: PCS Liverpool/ Bootle Campaign Account. Sort code: 60-83-01 Account number: 20415772

Southbank protest

WORKERS AT the Southbank Centre and the National Theatre on London's Southbank protested together last Saturday against job cuts.

Bosses at the Southbank Centre want to make 365 people redundant out of a workforce of 577.

It's an attempt to make workers pay with their jobs for a decision by bosses to close the centre until April next year. Bosses say they can't afford to stay open or keep people on, despite a bailout from

the government. The workers are members of either the PCS or Unite unions, with 200 members in each.

Workers at the National Theatre, which is next to the Southbank Centre, also protested. Some 400 casual workers there also face job losses.

The protest followed a similar action by workers at the nearby Tate Modern gallery the previous week.

Results of a strike ballot by workers at Tate Modern were set to be announced this week.

Racism in schools and police is exposed

Cops are more likely to use force against black people, and schools are more likely to exclude them

THE REALITY of officially sanctioned state racism was laid bare again last week in three devastating reports.

Figures from London's Met Police showed they were nearly four times more likely to use force on black people than white people.

Analysis of the Met's reporting also showed that restraint techniques are three times as likely to be used on black people. These include wristlocks, strikes, takedowns and ground-pinning.

London's cops used force 159,000 times in 2019-20, with more than a third of cases involving black people.

The police churned out tired and familiar stereotypes to justify the disparity.

A serving officer told the BBC that the disproportionate use of force was because police found black people "more threatening and aggressive".

Meanwhile, assistant commissioner Nick Ephgrave said the police response could only be judged when taking into account "the types of crimes committed, the type of demographics of individuals involved in those crimes".

Profiling

In other words, the police have a racialised system of profiling that associates young black people with certain types of crime—and a certain type of response.

A second report dealt with the school exclusions and found that black pupils are disproportionately hit with fixed-term suspensions.

In some parts of England, they are excluded at a rate three times higher than white pupils.

Analysis from the House of Commons Library also showed pupils with black ethnicity have higher temporary exclusion rate in two thirds of local authority areas.

And, again it's often the use of racial stereotypes that are to blame, with some schools banning particular black hairstyles, teeth kissing and even fist-bumps. Ranae James

FIGURE IT OUT

48 black people per 1,000 population had force used on them by Metropolitan police officers in 2019-20, according to the Met's own statistics

13 white people per 1,000 population had force used on them by Met police officers during the same period

was excluded dozens of times while her mother grappled with a mental health problem. She said her east London school had "stereotyped" her, rather than offering the support she needed.

"If you were upset and you kissed your teeth, you were excluded straight away," she said. "That was seen as the most antagonistic thing you could do."

Curriculum

A key factor in many pupils' alienation from school is the way the curriculum deliberately leaves out black and Asian people's histories and cultures.

Yet the government last week rejected a call from a cross-party group of MPs to add more black history to the national curriculum.

The MPs had merely requested that black historians be asked to offer some revisions to what is already taught, and some ideas for new topics.

But that was too much for schools minister Nick Gibb. He said that schools are already teaching the lives of black people, such as Mary Seacole and Rosa Parks—and that is really quite enough.



On other pages...

As cops shut down raves—why the state hates our parties>>>Page 14

Slavers' statues must fall



STAND UP to Racism protesters in Hackney, east London, demanded last Saturday that The Museum of the Home take down its statue of slaver Sir Robert Geffrye

PICTURE: DEAN RYAN

Horrendous attacks show dreadful consequences of state-driven racism

RACISM DRIVEN by the top of society has given the green light to bullies everywhere to take their prejudices to the streets.

Several serious racist attacks were reported at the end of July.

Two men were arrested last week on suspicion of attempted murder following a racist attack on an NHS worker in Bristol.

The victim, a young musician known as K-Dogg, was hit by a car while walking to a bus stop from his job at Southmead hospital.

He suffered serious injuries, including a broken leg, and will likely need plastic surgery.

Witnesses say the occupants of the car shouted racist abuse as they drove into him. A protest march was held last Saturday.

In Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, a 15-strong gang subjected an Asian family group aged between 10 and 14 to a barrage of racist abuse.

They then set on them with baseball bats. The Asian boys, who were in a park playground, were left with blood pouring from their wounds and had their shoes and jackets stolen.

Up to 60 people joined a protest organised by Stand Up To Racism and others last Saturday. One local

resident spoke to the crowd to say she had been disappointed at the police response to the attack.

She said they had not communicated well with the family and they have been reported as saying the attack happened because "Bishop's Stortford is a predominately white town".

People outraged by the attack have launched a crowd funding appeal to buy new clothes for the Asian boys to replace those stolen.

Arson

Police in Norwich have launched an arson investigation into a fire that last week damaged a former pub that is being converted into a Mosque and community centre.

"A man was seen to start a fire in an outbuilding before leaving the area," say police.

But amid their devastation, Sirajul Islam, the secretary of the Norwich Central Mosque, said he "can't believe how much support we are getting" from the whole community in the city.

These attacks are a warning to anti-racists everywhere.

Every time an MP or councillor spouts vile hatred, or seeks to put the blame for the coronavirus on black and Asian people there are dreadful consequences.

We must all be ready to respond quickly to the threat.

Thanks to Janet Szpakowski for report



Racists left musician K-Dogg (left) badly hurt

Huge rise in new virus cases as governments fail worldwide

Countries that previously were the least affected are now being thrown into the frontline, says **Sarah Bates**

THERE ARE further signs that transmission of coronavirus is accelerating. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recorded the highest daily number of new cases worldwide on Saturday.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO director-general, said, "The pandemic is a once-in-a-century health crisis, the effects of which will be felt for decades to come."

Many countries that believed they were past the worst are now grappling with new outbreaks. Some that were less affected in the earliest weeks are now seeing escalating numbers of cases and deaths.

Across the globe, health workers are battling an avalanche of severely ill people. Yet governments are refusing to listen to their pleas to put the battle against Covid-19 at the top of the political agenda.

In Mexico, Covid-19 infections continue to climb, and health officials announced a new daily high of 9,556 cases and 748 deaths.

The country has suffered some 47,472 confirmed coronavirus deaths and has surpassed Britain as the third highest death toll in the world.

Burnout

In the Philippines, doctors are urging the government to reimpose a lockdown in Manila as the virus begins to rage out of control.

"Our health workers are suffering burnout with seemingly endless numbers of patients trooping to our hospitals for emergency care and admission," said Jose Santiago, president of doctors' group Philippine Medical Association.

"We are waging a losing battle against Covid-19 and we need to

CORONAVIRUS

Number of confirmed cases

● UNITED STATES

4,700,000

● BRAZIL

2,730,000

● INDIA

1,800,000

● RUSSIA

856,000

● SOUTH AFRICA

511,000

draw up a consolidated and definitive plan of action."

And in Bolivia, where a right wing coup took place at the end of last year, the daily number of new cases continues to rise.

Over 3,000 bodies have been collected from their homes or from where they were dumped in the streets. Some 80 percent are estimated to be coronavirus victims.

"Obviously I feel very, very angry with the health system," said Paolo Medina, who lost her husband to the disease last week.

"They have made it so hard—and there are many people like me who didn't know where to turn."

Norma, a nurse in La Paz, said health workers were overwhelmed with the sheer number of cases.

"Sometime the patients are already dead when they arrive. We feel powerless—we can't give them oxygen because there are so many who need it. To see them die like that is just awful."

Devastating

Across the globe, hospitals are unable to keep up with the funding and staffing levels needed to keep people safe of a pandemic.

In the Indian state of Bihar, people are battling not only Covid-19 but a devastating monsoon that displaced at least 300,000 on Friday.

Rivers from neighbouring Nepal flood the state every year, but now the danger is worsened by the spread of coronavirus.

Bihar, which has reported 48,197 cases so far, has one doctor for every 17,000 people. The World Health Organisation recommends a ratio for one doctor per 1,000 people.

Bangladesh now faces similar challenges as up to a third of the country is flooded by the rains.



WOMEN AND children cover their faces in Dharavi, Mumbai, to ward against disinfectant

And many countries are seeing a dramatic rise as presidents and prime ministers end lockdowns in an attempt to get the economy re-started.

Over 500,000 cases have been confirmed in South Africa, which accounts for more than half of diagnosed infections across Africa.

The country has been battling a rising tide of infections since the gradual easing of one of the world's strictest lockdowns.

And France has seen its seven-day average of new cases reach over 1,000 for the first time since it eased its lockdown in early May. In

an effort to stem the tide of rising infections, Victoria in Australia has declared a state of disaster and placed Melbourne—the country's second biggest city—under night time curfew.

The state government has announced this new lockdown for six weeks.

Measures

People must stay within 5 kilometres of their home, only do an hour of exercise and stay indoors or in their gardens between 8pm and 5am.

Daniel Andrews, premier of Victoria, said the cops were ready to enforce the new measures.

"We can suspend various acts of the parliament and make sure that we get the job done and there's no question about the enforceability and the way in which the new rules will operate," he said.

In the US, all media have been barred from attending the Republican national convention from 21 August because organisers claim to be worried about spreading Covid-19.

Top US infectious disease expert Dr Anthony Fauci argued that the country is suffering such high rates

of infection because lockdowns were imposed too slowly.

There are currently 4.7 million cases in the US, and 18 million confirmed cases across the globe. Just over 689,000 deaths have been confirmed so far.

Coronavirus shows no sign of slowing down its deadly march across the US. Yet many school students are being forced back into the classroom.

On the very first day of term, Greenfield high school in Indiana was already forced to quarantine a "large group" of students after one tested positive for Covid-19.

Meanwhile England was confirmed this week as having the highest number of excess deaths in Europe.

Politicians want us to believe that this is simply the "new normal".

But their version of normality means ignoring the health needs of billions of people while the rich have access to tests, quarantine and the best treatment.

Instead we need to fight for decent public health care worldwide, and all the funding needed to end the threat of Covid-19.



Testing on the streets in India

Many countries are seeing flare-ups as governments end lockdowns'

Housing association rip-off

HOUSING associations have been breaking rent regulations all around London.

Freedom of Information Act replies show that in one-third of boroughs, new social rents were set above the “cap” which is the maximum permitted amount.

Two beds in Greenwich were £168.15 per week while the cap was £149.74, and three beds in Brent were £173.93 while the cap was £158.06.

Housebuilding landlords pile costs onto tenants through higher rents. They say “Housing benefit will take the strain”.

Social rent setting is supposedly “tenure-blind”, meaning it shouldn’t matter if your landlord is a council or a housing association. But housing associations charge much higher rents and service charges.

There is mounting evidence that existing social rents do not allow for decent living standards.

Some 638,000 children in Britain both suffer material deprivation and live in families with severely low incomes after housing costs—and half of them live in social renting households.

We have written a letter of protest to the housing secretary Robert Jenrick—but we know that it’s always best to meet him “socially”.

People are getting more educated. Let us empower tenants, open the books, and publish all social rent calculations.

Paul Burnham
Haringey Defend Council Housing
North London

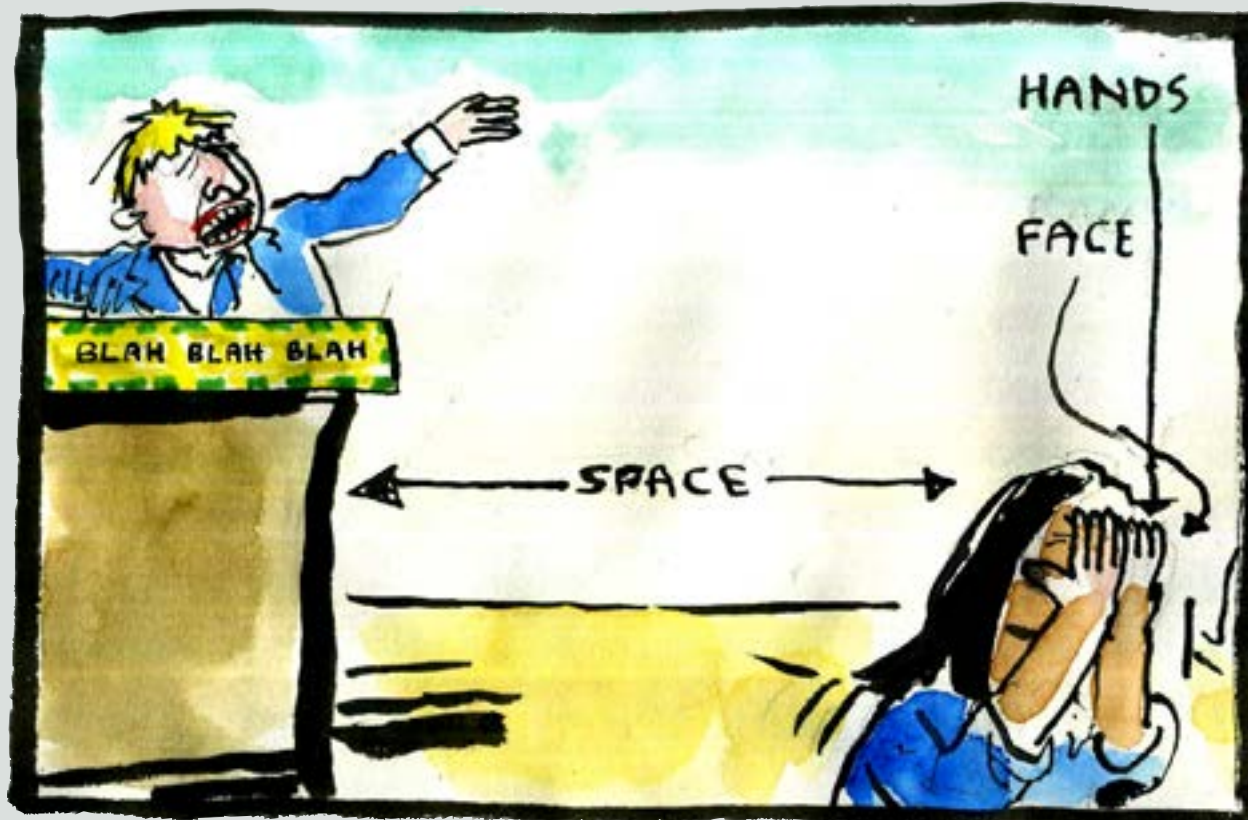


ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Museum is wrong. We won't walk in under slaver's boot

THE FIGHT continues to remove the statue of Robert Geffrye at Museum of the Home, in Hackney, east London.

Despite public demand, and a “public consultation” that showed a majority in favour of taking down the statue of the slave trader, the board of trustees has taken the disgraceful decision not to remove this racist blight on our local landscape.

The museum admits “the response was in favour of removing the statue”.

Yet it maintains that this repulsive tribute to a slaver must remain in its place above an entrance to the Georgian

almshouses that he had built using profits he had made from the blood of Africans.

The museum says it “acknowledges the pain caused by the connections between the museum buildings and the forced labour and trading of enslaved Africans”.

These are weasel words.

In truth, it’s prepared to make the ancestors of those slaves, and everyone who abhors the slave trade and the institutionalised racism it has fostered, continue to walk beneath the boot of a monster who profited from human misery.

The museum clearly hoped that

the Black Lives Matter movement would melt away.

But the trustees should remember what happened to the statue of the slaver Edward Colston in Bristol when local opinion was ignored.

Hackney council, which last week officially pledged to actively fight racism in our proud multicultural borough, must press for the removal of this insulting eyesore.

Meanwhile, anti-racists are gearing up for a major battle.

Protests are being planned now, and for the “official reopening” of the museum later this autumn.

Kate Ryan
East London

Questions for socialists

I THINK Socialist Worker is a fantastic paper and I particularly like the series “Radical Black Lives”—I’d never heard of Assata Shakur!

But what I think is missing from our literature is some discussion about what society would be like after the revolution. Housing, transport, social care, health, education, food production, climate, rural life vs urban, families, the elderly and so on.

Will there be encouragement of communal life? What about law and order?

Terry Skyrme
North Norfolk

We're all state capitalist now

I’VE BEEN reading Socialist Worker for quite some time now.

It seems to me, particularly in the era of Covid-19, we should be using the term “state capitalism” all the time when describing the role and intervention of the state in economic and political affairs.

We have all witnessed almost every country propping up the various financial markets.

The roll of the state to the survival of the capitalist system is crucial.

State capitalism should be used when describing China’s social and political system as well.

Ian Dudley
By email

Shut your gob, Tory scum!

SOCIALIST Worker’s front page last week was spot on.

Johnson and his filthy rich mates couldn’t wait to waltz into their posh restaurants as soon as they’d ended lockdown.

There they get the choice of the best cuts and the freshest of vegetables—no doubt all washed down with a “fruity little number”.

While millions of us have been working out how to feed the family during the Covid recession, they’ve chosen now to talk to us about diets.

If I ever come across Boris, I’ll shove a bag of Percy Pig sweets straight down his gob.

Jamie
Essex

Why does right wing rag expose Tories’ Russians?

AMAZINGLY THE Times newspaper has been ferocious in its condemnation of the Tories’ Russian connections.

The paper explored how London had been turned into a “laundromat” for billionaire gangsters and followed this up with a lead editorial, “Boris Johnski”, warning against the danger of the government being swept away by an “avalanche of scandal”.

As the editorial points out no less than 14 ministers “have received donations

from individuals or companies linked to Russia” and even more astonishing so have two of the Tories recently appointed to the intelligence committee.

For the Murdoch press to turn on Johnson in this way is remarkable.

Two possible reasons. They regard Johnson as a liability because of his incompetence, or they want to ensure the government is wholly subordinate to the US, or both.

John Newsinger
Brighton

Tories are peddling a ‘golden age’ myth

CYCLING AND similar forms of transport have seen a surge in popularity during Covid-19.

Now there’s a huge shortage of bikes and spares. As a result, some people are waiting for months for repairs.

If the myriad of bicycle firms can’t supply what is needed to keep people on the road then this should be centrally organised.

And if, as we have been told by Boris Johnson, this is to be a “golden age for cycling” then there is a fight coming for what that looks like.



Tory ideas fall flat

More cyclists means the already-inadequate road and cycle lane infrastructure will be overloaded.

There is currently a review of the Highway Code taking place, which is

partly in response to changes in the ways in which roads are used.

It introduces a “Hierarchy of Users”, which gives priority to the most vulnerable. This is a welcome change.

Yet the purpose of the review is largely to introduce new ways for the state to criminalise behaviour.

Unless plans are linked to massive investment in infrastructure, more cycling will mean more will die on our roads.

Sam Lorde
North Yorkshire

THE NHS WORKERS WHO ARE LEADING A GRASSROOTS PAY REVOLT SAY...

‘WE’VE HAD ENOUGH

After being ‘clapped’ by the Tories, NHS workers are furious at being left out of the government’s pay rise to some public sector workers. Workers across Britain told **Tomáš Tengely-Evans** why they’re taking the fight into their own hands

ESSEX NURSE Lea had “never been involved in protest, organising marches or anything like it”. She’s now one of the thousands of health workers leading a revolt over pay.

Workers are furious at Tory ministers’ refusal to give them a pay rise after they were clapped and praised as key workers during coronavirus.

Over 1,500 marched on Downing Street from St Thomas’ Hospital last Wednesday. And they’ve organised protests in towns and cities across Britain for this Saturday, 8 August.

“I didn’t want to sit on my backside and do nothing, especially after everything that’s happened with the coronavirus crisis,” Lea told Socialist Worker. “It’s highlighted the importance of the NHS and NHS workers—and there was lots of recognition like clapping and calling us heroes.

“It’s very disappointing to have no pay rise. I’ve continued to work throughout, and my twins continued to go to school everyday—it would be nice to be recognised.” The Tory government’s pay

insult has tapped into a deeper anger. Workers have faced more than a decade of stagnating pay, rocketing workloads, budget cuts and privatisation.

And then came coronavirus, the lack of PPE protective kit and the deaths of over 500 of their colleagues.

With neither union leaders nor the Labour Party leading any kind of resistance to the Tories over any of this, workers and their supporters have taken to organizing some themselves.

So many of the health workers at the forefront of the revolt have never been on a protest or picket line before and some aren’t in a union.

In Chesterfield, nurse Matt, who has organised a march for 8 August, says “It’s just phenomenal” how “it’s gone off like a rocket.”

“I’m not really into politics to be honest, but after the chancellor released the pay rises there was a fire in my belly,” he told Socialist Worker. “I thought there must be a mistake that we were not included. People feel ignored—it’s an utter stab in the back.”

Melanie, a nurse who is



organising the protest in Glasgow, says health workers are “always scared to say what we think.”

“But it’s time we did—we have to send a clear message,” she told Socialist Worker. “The message is, we have had enough.”

Boris Johnson, chancellor Rishi Sunak, health secretary Matt Hancock and other ministers joined the Claps for Carers on Thursdays. They praised NHS workers as heroes and key workers.

Workers who were routinely dismissed by politicians and pundits as “low skilled” were shown to be essential to running society.

The crisis has shown that, far from there being no “magic money tree” to fund public services, there’s plenty of money in society. It’s just in the wrong hands.

Now millions of people don’t want to go back to the “business as usual” of low pay, cuts, declining living standards and a race to the bottom.

Underpaid

Saoirse, a nurse who has organised the protest in Bristol, told Socialist Worker, “There’s a recognition now that unskilled isn’t a thing—underpaid is a thing.

“We have been squeezed in every direction, it’s about making sure we come together as one voice as the NHS.

“People focus very much on nurses, who haven’t been given a pay rise. Porters, cleaners and domestics, people who work in labs and physios, none of these people have been recognised despite risking their lives.”

Saoirse is another health worker who has thrown herself into organising around pay. “I organised



SO KEEN to be seen clapping—Tories Rishi Sunak, Boris Johnson and Matt Hancock (left) However, they’ve been much less keen to pay the workers who had to battle the virus without even adequate PPE (below and left)

Main images above: Dave Gilchrist and Socialist Worker

a very small protest against the Iraq War in my Somerset town when I was 16,” she said.

“And I was quite involved with the National Union of Students when I was doing my first degree, but since then not really done anything.”

But after seeing “there wasn’t an action in Bristol, I thought let’s do one and jumped into it with both feet”.

The sense of betrayal is felt acutely by many health workers, who have been on the frontline of coronavirus.

Kim is a community nurse who has set up a pay protest in Plymouth, the first ever one she’s been part of organising. “We have all worked so hard over Covid-19,” she told Socialist Worker.

“People have bent over backwards, our lives have been on the line, our families’ lives have been on the line.

“We were finding ourselves in the limelight, being appreciated, and seeing

Boris stood on the front steps clapping. “And then seeing him say we’re not getting a pay rise—it’s really demoralising.”

Many health workers have stayed away from their families in hotels to help contain the spread of the virus. Laura,

“**The sense of betrayal is acutely felt by those who’ve been on the frontline of coronavirus**

a nurse who has organised a protest in Liverpool, says “people struggled” through the coronavirus crisis.

“At the start of it, people were very scared,” she told Socialist Worker. “People were having to stay in hotel rooms, without even proper cooking facilities. Lots of people have had to pay extra for childcare, and to stay elsewhere was being taken out of a wage that people already struggle to live on.”

She added, “And what have we got for it? A second wave is coming—how can we get through the next one?”

Sister Kimberly, a nurse in Wigan who’s organised a march in Manchester, says workers “feel we’ve been through the worst experience within nursing” because of the pandemic. “Then to get no recognition is like



HEALTH WORKERS take the knee during their pay protest last week

a slap in the face,” she told Socialist Worker. “We have a lot of young single parents especially that are really struggling, they use food banks and rely on their family to survive.”

MINISTERS argue that the NHS is in the middle of a three-year pay deal, amounting to 6.5 percent. But the pay deal was mis-sold by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and Unison union leaderships in 2018. Workers were led to believe that they would receive more money in their pay packets than they did.

And the deal came on the back of a ten-year pay freeze under Labour and Tory governments, which overall has led to a 20 percent pay cut in real terms.

Kimberly explained, “The official figure for the last ten years is 20 percent down if you look at the cost of living increases.

“There was a pay deal in 2018, but what you had depended on pay banding and people who had put the years in didn’t get anything.”

Kim says “It’s difficult enough being a single mum” and low pay makes life harder. “It’s impossible to find somewhere to live,” she explained.

“It’s a pretty sad state at the age of 41, and it’s the same for a lot of people I work with.”

She added, “My 12 year old boy didn’t want to go school as a key worker’s son because he didn’t have any friends going in. I want to reward him for being so mature staying at home, but I can’t take him out, I can’t buy anything.”

Laura from Liverpool adds that poverty pay affects patient care too, as workers are forced to leave the health service. “We’ve got over 44,000 nursing vacancies in England alone,” she said. “People are having to do extra shifts.

“They are overworked and overtired, so demoralised and exhausted. There is no morale and now it’s just like being slapped in the face at the end.

“We’ve been clapped, but that’s not going to get people out of poverty. How can you preserve patient safety when you’re struggling yourself?”

The pay revolt shows how workers’ struggles can suddenly burst forth outside the official channels, whether political parties or trade unions.

In some parts of the country, workers involved in the pay revolt have learnt from the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. It showed the power of putting thousands of people onto the streets to challenge

injustice. Care worker Laura has organised the protest in Doncaster, South Yorkshire.

“I’ve done this slightly on the back of the BLM protests,” she explained to Socialist Worker, “Doncaster is relatively small and we can be left behind.

“But we staged a brilliant BLM protest. It made me really proud of Doncaster and to think, ‘We can do it over pay too’.”

Insitutional

At the march in London, workers knelt in support of Black Lives Matter. Speakers highlighted how poverty and racism meant that black and Asian health workers disproportionately died of Covid-19. Janet, a nurse from UCH hospital in central London, said that the “fight against low pay is part of the fight against institutional racism”.

In Bristol Saoirse said, “We want to amplify voices of people who don’t usually get to speak like porters and health care assistants.

“We’ve worked with the BLM movement in Bristol to make sure the Black and Asian perspective is included.”

She added, “We’re getting a lot of support from unions, but it’s cross party, cross union thing and transcends factions.

“None of the unions will speak on behalf of the union.”

The union leaders have been missing in action during the coronavirus crisis—and for many years before. They haven’t led a serious fight over pay, cuts or privatisation.

And they dragged their feet over raising concerns about PPE, fearing they would lose a seat at a table with government ministers.

“Social partnership” has failed. Union leaders need to be pushed to back this revolt, but those fighting now cannot rely on those at the top of the unions.

On Whitehall, organiser Dave Carr said it’s time to “build the biggest strike in the NHS” to huge cheers. And Carr addressed the Unison, GMB and Unite union leaderships, saying, “We pay your wages, now fight for ours.”

The crowd broke into chants of, “The workers united will never be defeated.”

Every trade unionist, health campaigner and socialist should throw themselves into supporting the protests on 8 August.

A win for the health workers would be a win for all workers. It would give other groups confidence to take up the fight against low pay and the Tories’ and bosses’ attempts to make ordinary people pay for the coronavirus crisis.

For details of the demonstrations go to **NHS Workers Say NO! to Public Sector pay inequality** on Facebook. For a map of the demonstrations with details go to bit.ly/NHS-pay-protest-map

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements. The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

Socialist Workers Party online meetings



FIGHTING TO remove the features of a racist system

Decolonising education—the legacy of Empire

BOLTON & WIGAN
Thu 13 Aug, 6.30pm
872-5136-9540

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST
Wed 12 Aug, 7.30pm
543-023-057

SOUTHAMPTON
Wed 12 Aug, 7.30pm
381-513-5080

{ SOCIALIST WORKER } ONLINE MEETINGS

Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and our local interventions. All welcome.

BIRMINGHAM
By any means necessary—the revolutionary legacy of Malcolm X
Wed 12 Aug, 7pm
281-634-5938

BLACK COUNTRY
By any means necessary—the revolutionary legacy of Malcolm X
Wed 12 Aug, 8pm
352-891-2411

BRIGHTON & HOVE
The US and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan
Thu 13 Aug, 6.30pm
818-1857-1448

BRISTOL
Trump vs China—imperialism in the era of coronavirus
Thu 13 Aug, 7.30pm
688-397-3148

BURNLEY & PENDLE
All the statues should fall—confronting the legacy of slavery and empire
Wed 12 Aug, 7.30pm
446-409-5118

CAMBRIDGE
Where does racism come from?
Thu 13 Aug, 7.30pm
681-800-4408

CARDIFF
Fake news and alternative facts—who controls the media?
Wed 12 Aug, 7.30pm
630-181-4857

CHESTERFIELD
How US communists fought racism in the 1930s
Thu 13 Aug, 6.30pm
829-532-8731

COVENTRY
Why are the police so racist?
Wed 12 Aug, 7.30pm
823-945-1917

DUNDEE, ABERDEEN & PERTH
Covid, capitalism and economic crisis
Wed 12 Aug, 7.30pm
396-573-1805

EDINBURGH
Trump, authoritarianism and the spectre of fascism
Wed 12 Aug, 7.30pm
431-459-112

EXETER
The revolutionary ideas of Angela Davis
Wed 12 Aug, 7pm
865-2972-2883

GLASGOW
A rebel's guide to Mary Wollstonecraft
Thu 13 Aug, 6.30pm
848-1501-3898

HARLOW
Why socialists oppose all borders
Thu 13 Aug, 7.30pm
832-8746-7480

HUDDERSFIELD
Coronavirus, capitalism and mental health
Thu 13 Aug, 6.30pm
290-168-1804

KENT
The rise of the far right across Europe
Thu 13 Aug, 8.15pm
434-623-8064

LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE
Covid, capitalism and economic crisis
Thu 13 Aug, 6.30pm
992-204-9372

LEEDS
Pride and protest—socialists and the fight for LGBT+ rights
Thu 13 Aug, 7.15pm
935-5290-8076

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Court in the constitution—the lawyers taking on Trump

The American Civil Liberties Union is the focus of the resistance to Trump in documentary *The Fight*. But it can't overcome its limitations, says **Nick Clark**

THE SENSE that there's a great, high stakes battle raging in US society underlies every aspect of this interesting documentary, released last Friday.

The *Fight* follows the efforts of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) as it challenges through the courts Donald Trump's assaults on democratic and civil rights.

ACLU lawyers take on four cases that challenge some of Trump's flagship policies.

One battles to end the detention of migrant children away from their parents, while another defends the right of detained refugee women to access abortions.

ACLU lawyers also take on Trump's move to ban transgender people from serving in the military.

And they challenge an attempt to add a question to the census about citizenship status—which would in practice disenfranchise huge numbers of migrants and their families.

Impact

One thing the documentary does well is show the impact each of these assaults has on the lives of ordinary people. There's some harrowing and moving footage of migrant parents being finally reunited with their very young children after months of detention and separation.

It also very deliberately presents each case as part of a bigger political battle. ACLU lawyer Josh Block says the ban on trans people serving in the military is "the president's declaration of open season on trans people".

There's also no doubt about the dedication, resilience and sacrifice of the lawyers it follows.

All of them at some point describe the long stressful hours they work



THE ACLU thinks it can bring justice through the US constitution

because they've seen realities of Trump's rule and can't bear to stand it.

But there are also difficult questions about their relationship to the bigger fight against Trump that none of them quite manage to square.

There's unavoidably a connection with the mass protests that have been at the centre of every great movement of resistance to Trump. And at first the relationship seems

totally harmonious. The film opens with footage of the mass demonstrations that greeted Trump's 2017 attempt to exclude migrants from seven Muslim-majority countries.

As protests against deportations rage outside airports, volunteers inside offer legal assistance to anyone detained.

And as ACLU lawyers win a legal challenge against the order, protesters outside the court cheer

them on. But the movement and the ACLU can only go so far together. There are tensions and outright conflicts that can't be overcome.

The ACLU's commitment to the liberal rhetoric of free speech in the US constitution led it to defend the right of Nazis to march in Charlottesville in 2017.

The resulting far right rampage—and the murder of anti-fascist Heather Heyer—put it at odds with the anti-Trump movement and made even its highest officials uncomfortable.

The tensions are more subtle too.

Conservative

With a focus on the courts, ACLU lawyers explain occasionally shying away from challenging Trump politically in favour of legalistic arguments they hope will convince conservative judges.

And ultimately, their victories are always short lived.

Trump always returns with a new way to push his attacks through the courts.

It all leads one ACLU lawyer, Dale Ho, to a conclusion you might not expect from him.

"A lot of people have been running up to us saying things like, you're our hope against the forces that have put Trump in power and you're going to be what's going to stop this thing. And I think that's wrong," he says.

"We're not going to be able to stop this thing ourselves. Against the power of the federal government and this massive political movement, we're not going to solve it.

"It's not going to be lawyers in courts it's going to be people who turn the ship around."

The *Fight* is available to stream on digital platforms now

Expose of corruption and sexism at heart of system

DOCUMENTARY

JEFFREY EPSTEIN: FILTHY RICH

Available now on Netflix

THIS four-part documentary has been out on Netflix since May. But if you haven't seen it, I recommend it.

The final scenes are very uplifting. A group of the Jeffrey Epstein's victims make it to New York to assist the court case against their tormentor.

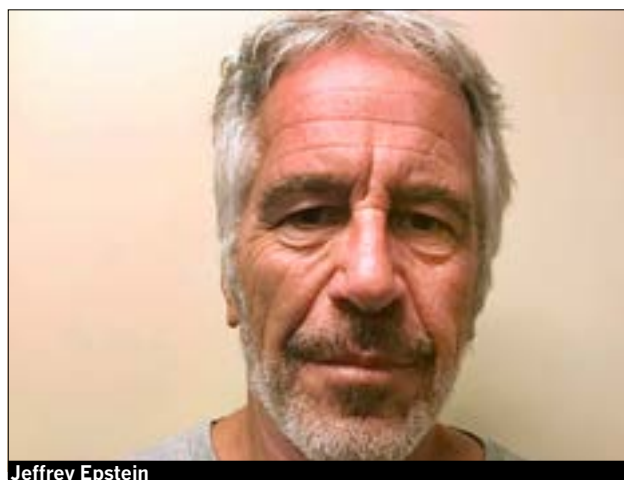
They get to look him in the eye, before he is found

dead in his prison cell.

The judge nevertheless keeps the case open and invites 30 survivors to speak for themselves in court. This is an opportunity for them to befriend each other and to swear to fight for victims' rights.

To encourage them to speak out and to hold the police and the judiciary to account, who for decades had turned a blind eye.

The only police officer who at a very early stage took the underage victims seriously also plays an



Jeffrey Epstein

important part. But he came up against a wall of silence in the FBI and in the person of the main prosecutor, Acosta, whom Trump later chose as labour secretary.

Other filthy figures in this short series include Bill Clinton, Prince Andrew, Ghislaine Maxwell and some of the wealthiest bosses in finance.

This series is an unforgettable indictment of the capitalist system and its sexist treatment of women and girls.

David Paenson

FILM

CLEMENCY

Available to stream on digital platforms now

BERNADINE Williams is a prison warden who, over the years, has been drifting away from her husband while dutifully carrying out executions in a maximum security prison.

She oversees the execution of an inmate that goes awry when the medical



Alfre Woodard in Clemency

staff can't find a vein. Eventually a vein is found and the inmate is executed.

When she strikes up a unique bond with death-row inmate Anthony Woods—who maintains his innocence—her commitment begins to break down.

Bernadine is forced to confront what it means to be sanctioned by the state to kill.

FILM

SPINSTER

Available on digital platforms from Friday 7 August

AFTER BEING dumped on her 39th birthday, Gaby (Chelsea Peretti) must tackle the preconceptions of what it means to be a single woman.



Chelesea Peretti in Spinster

Determined not to be lonely, Gaby goes on several dates only to realise her real problem is not that she isn't in a relationship.

Changing her direction, Gaby decides to focus on herself and a new journey of self-discovery.

By reconnecting with friends and family, she finds new dreams of empowerment and independence.

Throughout June and July, parties of several thousand people have grabbed headlines and focused right wingers' attention on "illegal raves" during the pandemic.

Violet explained why she went to several raves during the lockdown. "If I can go to the cinema, a theme park, walk around Sainsbury's, go back to work, go on public transport, why can't I be in the same spatial awareness ratio doing something I want to do?" she told Sky News.

It's true that large public gatherings, even outdoors, do carry some risk of transmitting Covid-19. But the same right wingers condemning people for dancing in a field are actively encouraging them into workplaces, classrooms and cramped public transport.

Cops trying to shut down parties this summer follows decades of legislation to stop large gatherings of people that they struggle to control.

The most significant attack came 26 years ago, with the Criminal Justice Act and Public Order Act 1994.

John Major's Tory government was desperate to end the "New Age" festivals, illegal raves and free parties that grew in popularity in the late 1980s and early '90s.

The 1992 Castlemorton Common Festival, which lasted a week in 1992 and drew up to 40,000, was a crunch point.

Arrested

The cops arrested 13 members of the band Spiral Tribe/SP23 as they were one of the last to leave the site. Cyrus of Spiral Tribe/SP23 said, "The reaction is about fear as much as anything else.

"The authorities couldn't understand how this many people could assemble in one place, in pre-internet, pre-mobile days.

"Add into that the fact that Castlemorton coverage was peppered with shots of police looking, quite frankly, helpless.

"That loss of control hammered them into cracking down much harder than they might otherwise have done."

The state doesn't like large gatherings it can't control and will use all its instruments of repression, such as the police, to undermine them.

And at Castlemorton, it didn't look good that the police were unable to lay down law and order when tens of thousands occupied a corner of the countryside.

But it's not just embarrassment that drives the police's desperation to shut down the parties. Their role within capitalism is to defend property and privilege of the minority at the top of society and police working class people.

The Major government's



A PROTEST against the Criminal Justice Bill in London in 1994 PICTURE MARK CAMPBELL

THE RIGHT HATES OUR PARTIES

Moral panic over 'illegal raves' is nothing new. Sarah Bates looks at how the state tries to police ordinary people coming together—and says it's our job to repetitively beat them back



Tory party pooper John Major

legislation—then known as the Criminal Justice Bill—strengthened the powers of the state and police.

"The bill is a savage attack on our rights to picket, protest and part aimed at increasing the control of those at the top of society over the majority of people," reported Socialist Worker at the time.

It said cops could shut down outdoor events featuring music that's "characterised by the emission of a succession of



Tory PM John Major was desperate to end free parties and raves

repetitive beats". And a swathe of the Act was devoted to criminalising what were previously civil offences—trespassing, squatting and unauthorised camping.

Section 60 of the Criminal Justice Act gave the police greater stop and search powers. The law also repealed the responsibility for councils to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers to stay on.

It ended the "right to silence" for people accused of a crime,

and said legal authorities could draw conclusions about their refusal to speak. And it gave the cops new powers to take and retain intimate bodily samples.

There was huge resistance to the bill.

Sound systems and activist groups mounted three huge demonstrations in central London throughout 1994. The organisers of the 9 October demonstration said 100,000 took to the streets—it was here that the cops chose to attack.

Cops sealed Tube stations, blocked Park Lane, deployed tear gas and trapped demonstrators before charging them repeatedly on horseback.

Vincent Seabrook, a Liberty legal observer said, "I was pushed down on the floor, punched, hit across the back with a truncheon, and then three police were just kicking me and hitting me with truncheons."

People fighting for squatters' rights, anti-road protesters and animal rights activists joined with the free party movement to kill the bill. And trade unionists and workers opposed the bill.

It was a direct attack on the right of everyone—whether listening to repetitive beats or speeches on a picket line—to gather and challenge authority.

ULTIMATELY, the bill—pushed relentlessly by the Tories—was passed into law. Labour abstained in the final vote, but then-leader Tony Blair boasted his party had helped write some of the legislation.

The first four protesters arrested under the Act weren't accused of listening to repetitive beats, but climbing a 100 foot crane as part of an anti-road action.

Although nothing like the scale of Castlemorton has been seen since, the bill didn't quite stop the repetitive beats—raves have happened ever since.

The fight for the right to party spurred on an entire generation of activists who would be part of later battles against the system.

The movement against the Act—and its habit of having large sound systems on protests—fed into Reclaim the Streets movement to defend public spaces. Many activists joined the anti-capitalist, environmental and anti-globalisation protests of the early 2000s.

And it's possible to see hallmarks of the free party movement in the audacious Extinction Rebellion occupations.

But the Bill did fundamentally change the landscape of British nightlife, and helped create the clubs and festival industry we know today.

That's because counter-culture—however subversive it is for a time—isn't allowed to stay underground

for long. Many of the collectives that operated the big sound systems went on to set up clubs both in Britain and abroad.

They sought legal means to keep the beats pounding, and the profits coming in. So a movement that had a subversive element at its heart eventually becomes subject to planning regulations, curfews and entry fees.

Free parties were eventually tamed both by bosses looking to make a quick buck and the state looking to control them.

The 1990s free party movement is part of a rich history of people pushing back against cop repression.

From the 1950s onwards, sound system parties with illegal bars and pounding sound systems provided a social focus of Caribbean migrant communities. They were filled with people who were often excluded from racist pubs and clubs—so they curated their own events in houses or community centres.

THE COPS usually weren't far behind. Music journalist John Masouri remembers, "The police harassment was coming on strong.

"You'd often be in places and the police would raid them and search everybody and close off the system, close off the club...but you kind of got used to that—it became part of the experience.

"Whenever young people gather to have a good time there's always someone that wants to spoil it, y'know?"

It was partly this police repression that fuelled the politically-driven reggae music of the 1970s.

The Notting Hill Carnival began in 1966 as a celebration of Caribbean music, food, identity and culture.

The police still try to control it. Every year the cops whip up panic about drug dealing and rioting when in reality there are very low rates of crime.

Then as now, state concerns about raves, parties or carnivals aren't borne out of worries for public safety.

In the 1990s worries about drugs were used as a smokescreen to attack the alternative scene.

It's the same today—Tory ministers are quick to decry raves or free parties claiming they worry about the risk of transmitting Covid-19. They



A SPEAKER at an anti-CJB protest in Tottenham (top), demands justice for Winston Silcott, wrongly jailed over the death of a cop. Several thousand people attended a rave in Manchester in June (above)

used fear about drugs in the 1990s in a similar way.

The truth is that ordinary people coming together in large numbers—whether for political rallies or all-night parties—worries the ruling class. They fear it will challenge the authorities' control of the streets.

Although the much of the trade unions and revolutionary left supported the fight against the bill, the real drive to end it came from ravers.

It shows that opposition to state repression can come from the most surprising of quarters, and pull in people who never would have considered themselves politically active before.

The Tories will continue to hammer us with legislation that criminalises pickets, protests and parties—it's our job to repetitively beat them back.

READ MORE

● **Energy Flash—a Journey Through Rave Music and Dance Culture** by Simon Reynolds £9.99

● **The Notting Hill Riot and a Carnival of Defiance. How we can take control** Socialist Worker article bit.ly/NHillSW

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What lies behind lowest rape conviction figures?

Sarah Bates looks at why so few rape cases make it to court—and why is it so difficult to secure a conviction

RAPE CONVICTIONS in England and Wales fell to a record low last year. Despite higher levels of reporting of rapes in 2019-20, the number of prosecutions and convictions has been slashed by half in just three years.

The police recorded more than 55,000 rapes, resulting in only 2,102 prosecutions and 1,439 people found guilty.

Sarah Green from End Violence against Women said, "Today's figures show starkly that we are right to say rape has been effectively decriminalised."

One reason for the low conviction figures is that the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) doesn't pursue enough complaints.

This is partly because of myths about the reality of sexual violence.

In 90 percent of rapes, the parties are known to each other—yet campaigners say the CPS is reluctant to push ahead with these prosecutions because of how this dynamic is perceived.

"We still hold a lot of myths and stereotypes about what makes a 'good' rape victim," said Katie Russell from the Rape Crisis charity.

"There are a lot of very practical issues with the prosecution of cases where one party says it was consensual and the other party doesn't."

"The cases that are easier to pursue from a police and CPS perspective, and will gain more sympathy from juries, are stranger rapes, where they are obvious signs of physical violence," she said.

Another reason is because the CPS want to have a high rate of conviction—so will only proceed with complaints it thinks have a good chance of winning.

The Guardian newspaper reported in 2018 that CPS workers were told during training sessions that taking "weak cases out of the



COPS' STEREOTYPES of 'good' victims hamper prosecutions

BACK STORY

Rape convictions in Britain have fallen to a record low

- Police referrals to prosecutors have almost halved
- The Crown Prosecution Service won't pursue 'difficult' cases
- Fear drives many victims to drop their cases

system" would result in more favourable conviction rates.

Another factor to consider is that victims don't always want to follow through with investigations. Some 41 percent of people choose not to proceed with their complaint after reporting it.

Failed

Partly this is because of the invasive nature of proceedings. Until July, it was legal for the police to request a victim's phone history over a period of years.

Women are failed at every level of the legal system.

The police are partly to blame—they are passing



Ideas about sexual assault reflect wider prejudices

on fewer reports to the CPS. In just three years, referrals from the cops have dropped 40 percent.

Victims put off reporting crimes because they know the system is stacked against them.

Only a tiny minority of complainants will ever enter a courtroom, and an even smaller number will see their rapist brought to justice.

Throughout the legal system, women's concerns are trivialised or ignored and standard practices serve to subtly or overtly place the blame on women and their behaviour.

These ideas about sexual assault reflect a much wider view of women's place in society and of systematic women's oppression.

A survey, released in December 2018 by End Violence Against Women, showed the extent of these attitudes.

Some 11 percent of respondents said that "the more sexual partners a woman has, the less harm she will experience from a rape."

A third of men, and 21 percent of women said that it would not usually be considered rape if a woman had flirted on a date.

As shocking as the most recent figures may be, they are not surprising.

The legal system notoriously doesn't protect victims of sexual violence, from the moment they make a complaint until the point their rapist walks free.

THOMAS SANKARA

Goal of liberation couldn't come from above

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

THOMAS SANKARA is sometimes referred to as "Africa's Che Guevara".

He was one of a series of leaders in the Global South who championed national development and social change in the era after independence.

He was born in the West African state of Burkina Faso—then a French colony and known as Upper Volta—in 1949.

His father was originally a low-level officer in the army of the colonial state.

As such, Thomas Sankara was able to access education and to progress through the military academy to lead the Commando Training Centre.

Promises

The reality of independence from 1960 was very different to the promises of freedom.

French multinationals still extracted the country's wealth and the French state looked to compliant local leaders to meekly follow the dictates of imperialism. Sankara railed



THOMAS SANKARA tried to bring radical change to Burkina Faso

against this outside control in the interests of an elite.

He believed the army could be an instrument of national emancipation and was inspired by the movements in Cuba and Algeria that had confronted imperialism.

Despite the repression and the assaults on workers and peasants, he also saw Russia as a model.

The strong centralised state under Joseph Stalin had enabled extraordinary economic development and

seemed to be an alternative to Western regimes headed by the United States.

A series of power struggles that began in the late 1970s saw Sankara become a leading figure in the battle for power. In 1981 he was

minister of information in a military government that triumphed through a coup.

He left when it abolished the right to strike.

Another coup saw him become prime minister in 1983. But he was removed after he called for breaking links with France.

His position was saved by mass protests of students and workers—and by an uprising by his Commando colleagues. From then on, Sankara made important changes.

Nationalised

In 1984 the government nationalised land and food production rose substantially.

The expansion of education saw tens of thousands of rural people learn to read and write. Women won new rights.

A clash with imperialism soon followed.

As economic crisis bit in the 1980s, international financial institutions that controlled the country's debt clamoured for more pro-market measures.

Sankara called for African

countries to unite, telling one conference, "Those who lend us money are those who colonised us."

"Debt is a skilfully managed reconquest of Africa. If we don't repay, lenders will not die. But if we repay, we are going to die."

But Sankara had no mechanism to put his more radical ideas into practice.

Seeing the army and the state as central to change meant he didn't build up the workers' power that had reinstated him.

Worse, during his rule trade unions were banned and denounced as "subversive". Around 1,500 striking teachers were sacked.

This created space for his enemies to mobilise. In 1987 one of his former allies, Blaise Compaore, led a military coup against his government.

Sankara was shot dead and Compaore was congratulated by France and reactionary African leaders.

Sankara's revolution from above had been snuffed out.

This is part of a series about radical black lives Go to bit.ly/SWBlackLives

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Blame Tories not the poor for obesity and hunger

The rolling out of new measures to tackle obesity shames poor people and will not tackle a crisis that the Tories made worse, says Sarah Bates

THE Tories claim to be fighting obesity with a series of new measures aimed at encouraging people to drop five pounds of weight.

Apart from being a shameless attempt to divert attention from their own coronavirus failings, it just won't work.

It is true that early statistics show that people who are overweight or obese have an increased risk of serious complications and death from Covid-19.

But the government and health service's obsession with weight loss and the narrative constructed about the dangers of obesity ignore wider factors about health.

Instead of a holistic approach to healthy living, overweight people face hostility from the government, the NHS, and some of the public.

Combatting rates of obesity is far from the silver bullet that the government's new public information campaign implies.

Snacks

It is making calorie information in restaurants mandatory, banning unhealthy snacks at supermarket checkouts and axing junk food adverts before 9pm.

Their blame game declares our waistlines as simply a matter of personal choice.

Professor John Ashton said the government's approach was "victim blaming" obese people.

"They are all about blaming it on people's individual choices.

They are very reluctant to interfere with the commercial sector because it is easier to focus on and blame the individual." But, it's not

just obesity that's the problem—there is also the horror of daily hunger. After just a few weeks of lockdown in Britain three million people were in households where someone was forced to skip meals.

And with food bank use on the rise, more people have less control over their diets than normal.

One woman who started using food banks said that she used tinned and processed food much more now as they came in the parcels.

"Before we had to rely on food banks, I always cooked meals from scratch and tried to eat healthy and nutritious food," she said.

Like hunger, obesity effects the poor most.

Deprived

The government's obesity report said that "Children in the most deprived parts of the country are more than twice as likely to be obese as their peers living in the richest areas."

People working long shifts, will find it easier and cheaper to grab pre-packaged food than spend hours cooking a meal from scratch.

That's not because poor people don't understand how to keep healthy—but because they are trapped in a system that makes it almost impossible.

Luke Billingham, a youth worker in east London said that if the government "really wanted to tackle child obesity" it could invest in sports facilities and training for young people.

Tory Britain—a place where the twin horrors of obesity and hunger stalk the land, and the only plan to solve it lets food bosses off the hook, while blaming ordinary people.



FOODBANKS OFTEN can't provide fresh produce

Leisure centres under threat

AFTER A decade of cuts and privatisation, many people struggle to afford the exercise facilities that would make it easier to stay healthy.

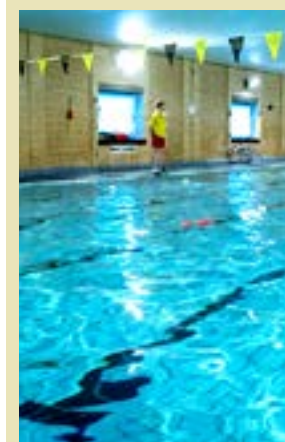
And the situation is likely to worsen after the pandemic.

Councils aren't legally obliged to provide them—so they could be one of the first services to go.

The £800 million bailout that leisure bosses are asking for should be poured into the industry but used to take these services back into public hands.

Swimming pools and gyms are so expensive because bosses cream off profits from public services.

If the government was serious about encouraging healthy living, it would make these services free or very cheap—not just available to those who could afford it.



Food parcel disgrace

THE government boasted that it would help some 50,000 extremely clinically vulnerable people with weekly food parcels.

But some people complained that emergency parcels were coming with no fresh food in them or, like shielder Lorraine Smith, with rotten fruit "every week".

"I don't know how they can give people that," she said. "It's degrading to people that are shielding."

The Tories withdrew all food parcel support last week and are encouraging shielders to go to the shops to get their supplies.

Government must go much further to end food crisis

A government report has recommended changes that it claims will tackle child hunger and food supply.

Authored by Henry Dimbleby, Leon restaurant co-founder and son of David Dimbleby, the report outlines a new "national food strategy".

It said that the Covid-19 pandemic "has given new urgency to the slow-motion disaster of the British diet".

Even one of the nation's favourite confectionaries was in



Henry Dimbleby

the firing line. Percy Pig sweets were blasted for their misleading packaging, which claims they are free of "artificial colours or flavourings."

Million

The report recommended that 1.5 million more children should receive free school meals and more pregnant women get access to fresh food vouchers.

The review calls for enough checks on imported food to ensure it meets the "gold standard"

of independent scrutiny.

It called for 1.1 million children to benefit from holiday hunger schemes in 16 local council areas at a cost of £200 million.

The next report will look at how meat consumption impacts on climate catastrophe and recommend how a more environmentally friendly food system can be built.

It's a welcome step that scrutiny is being placed on the government's food failures.

But the report is

toothless, and the government doesn't even have a duty to formally respond to its findings.

The Tories aren't interested in giving people better diets.

If they were, it wouldn't have taken footballer Marcus Rashford and widespread public disgust to force them to extend the free school meal policy over the summer holidays.

It will require more than such reports to bring the government to task over this critical issue.

Poorest in danger as virus hits India slums

New report states that millions of people are now vulnerable to catching the coronavirus in India

A NEW report reveals that Covid-19 is tightening its grip on India and that millions of the world's poorest people are in grave danger.

According to official figures, the country is already third in the league table of nations worst affected, with almost 1.5 million recorded infections and 33,000 deaths.

Now, a government commissioned study indicates that the spread of Covid-19 could be far greater than previously thought.

The results from antibody tests reveal that more than half the residents in several slums in the giant city of Mumbai indicate they have been infected.

Tests conducted in the first weeks of July found that 57 percent of those in slums had antibodies, compared with 16 percent of those living in other parts of the city.

Public health experts have repeatedly warned that India's testing regime is too weak to arrive at a real figure of the numbers infected.

Slums

The enormous slums of India's economic capital Mumbai are the very symbol of modern India.

The skyline gleams with light reflected from glass towers that are home to the very rich.

Yet millions of poor workers are densely packed in squalor where social distancing is impossible.

Toilets, where they exist, are shared, as are water standpipes. There is no sanitation system to carry away the waste of communities sometimes tens of thousands-strong.

That's why Mumbai and the surrounding region, home to about 20 million people, have been hardest hit with officially more than 100,000 recorded cases and 6,000 deaths.

As the virus rages out of control ministers are still trying to spin their way out of responsibility.

The hard right government of prime minister Narendra Modi is

BACK STORY

In March a lockdown of over a billion people was imposed. But since then the country has struggled to contain the spread

● By the Saturday after the imposed lockdown thousands of people desperately tried to return home fearing starvation

● Prime minister Modi demanded that state governments use 'physical force' to stop people from moving throughout the country

deliberately trying to obscure the truth.

After a failed national lockdown that owed more to his desire to be seen as tough rather than any public health concerns, they are desperately seeking to cover their tracks.

The coming recession in India is set to be of epic proportions. Modi's every move now is calculated on how best to salvage the economy—and his party's battered reputation.

Impressed

Professor Jha of Harvard Global Health Institute is not impressed.

"I am deeply worried that in the days and weeks ahead, hospitals are going to really get strained, and people are going to start dying in much larger numbers.

Deaths will rise, and I worry they will rise sharply," he told the Financial Times newspaper last week.

Sanitation workers and miners are among those workers who have struck during the pandemic.

If the lives of the poor are to be spared from the killer virus, it will take the action of millions of others to bring down this rich-obsessed government and put the needs of the poor first.



On other pages...

Why antisemitism is a prejudice of the rich and powerful >>Page 6



SOME OF the worlds poorest are at risk of suffering the most because of government's inaction and mistakes made in handling the coronavirus

RUSSIA

Thousands of workers in Russia join riots and strikes over unpaid wages

by **SOCIALIST TENDENCY**, Russian Federation

A WAVE of workers' protests and riots over unpaid wages and working conditions has swept Russia during the coronavirus pandemic.

Around 300 workers rioted at the Gazprom gas works by the Amur River, near the Russian Chinese border, at the beginning of July. They ransacked the offices of subcontractor Renaissance Heavy Industries, which had not paid them wages in three months.

Riots cops were brought in to disperse the crowd—and the state is pursuing criminal charges against the workers.

Caretakers

On the same day caretakers in Moscow gathered outside the offices of Zhilishchnik (Dweller), which manages municipal housing. The workers in the Levoberezhny district, migrants from central Asian republics, say their wages are a third below those of caretakers in other districts.

A few days later on 17 July workers at Sheremetevo Airport in Moscow protested to demand

overtime payments. On the same day 500 building workers at Saint Petersburg's Lachta Centre—an 87-story skyscraper—struck over back pay.

A large number of workers from central Asia were active, another indication of migrants' importance in defending workers' rights in Russia.

Earlier in the month council workers in Ufa's street cleaning and repair department walked out.

Workers in the southern Russian city are angry at wage cuts and bosses' broken promises while they have had to keep working during the pandemic.

On 6 July day-shift workers refused to sweep, scrub, hose down, repair, and disinfect the streets of the virus—and then night shift workers supported them.

The following day officials announced an investigation into workers' complaints.

Meanwhile, workers at the Delivery Club online food delivery company struck in three cities in western Russia.

Members of the Couriers' union in Saint Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod and Novosibirsk are fighting over unpaid wages,

unfounded fines by bosses, and contracts. Around 300 couriers protested at the Delivery Club's central offices on 9 July.

The action forced bosses to drop the fines, amounting to around nine million rubles, but workers are still fighting over unpaid wages.

Crisis

The struggles of Russian workers show how, in times of crisis and slump, the capitalists try to protect their profits at workers' expense.

But they also show that workers are ready to fight for their rights by any means available.

Economic demands give rise to political demands, ones that will unite workers in all industries and regions of Russia and the world.

Some day the target will no longer be a specific employer but the political elite, the state, and the world economic order.

By acting together and showing solidarity, we can change not only our own situation, but the world's.

A longer version is available at socialistworker.co.uk

Socialist Tendency is a socialist organisation based in Nizhny Novgorod. Their website (in Russian) is at bit.ly/STRussia

HIGHER EDUCATION

Step up fight after rotten deal rejected

by CARLO MORELLI UCU Scotland President (personal capacity)

WORKERS IN the UCU union across the higher education sector have voted to reject the employers' offer to end the "four fights" dispute.

The vote was 61 percent to reject, 39 percent to accept.

This is a fantastic and remarkable vote after 22 days of strikes before Christmas last year and during February and March this year.

The Covid-19 pandemic which closed universities led to the halting of the dispute. But despite this members have overwhelmingly rejected this settlement.

Jobs

University workers are being threatened with mass redundancies. Already thousands of casual staff on hourly paid and fixed term contracts are losing their jobs.

Those on permanent contracts face compulsory redundancies, pay cuts and re-employment on worse terms and conditions.

The list of universities affected grows daily but already includes Sheffield, SOAS, Heriot-Watt, Liverpool, Reading, Roehampton and Goldsmiths. British



THE FOUR Fights were central to the strikes this year

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

universities are expecting falls of 50 percent in international student fee income.

Conference income has dried up, student accommodation remains empty and students are demanding refunds for untaught courses.

These instabilities are all due to the marketisation of higher education since the introduction of student fees.

The dispute in 2019-20 was in response to the other side of marketisation—a prolonged onslaught on pay and conditions of staff. A third of teaching and research staff are on casualised contracts.

Excessive workloads led to a wave of health problems and burnout.

Institutionalised race and gender discrimination is rife while pay has been in decline since 2006. The Four Fights campaign was designed to tackle these problems.

Now members have refused to accept employers' attempts to further intensify the problems the campaign revealed with divide and rule tactics.

The ballot result is also a critique of the union leadership's woefully inadequate response to the crisis. The leadership has openly

criticised the 22 days of Britain-wide strikes, suggesting alternatives are possible yet have failed to provide any.

Worse still, union leaders have put forward a "Jobs First" agenda that will trade off pay and conditions for promises of job security.

UCU members now have to organise to ensure solidarity is provided to all branches resisting cuts.

Already a new Solidarity Movement is organising physical socially distanced protests for Thursday 13 August in response to the cuts at universities.

FIREFIGHTERS

Anger after fire pay insult

FIREFIGHTERS AND control room workers are discussing industrial action against an "insulting" 2 percent pay increase.

FBU union leader Matt Wrack slammed the proposed deal offered by fire service bosses after firefighters took on extra duties during the coronavirus crisis.

The FBU says it is consulting its members on the below-inflation offer, and will "discuss campaigning options around pay and conditions over the coming year, including various forms of industrial action."

Firefighters have taken on 14 extra areas of work in response to the pandemic.

These include driving ambulances, delivering supplies and moving bodies.

The FBU has also agreed to further duties including assembling personal protective equipment, and training care home workers in infection prevention and control.

FBU members have previously rejected plans to take on extra work for little extra pay. Taking on such duties can also mean doing work that should be performed by NHS workers.

After a decade of pay freezes and below-inflation increases, firefighters are around £4,000 worse off than they were in 2010.

HEALTH WORKERS

Sick pay win at Homerton

OUTSOURCED workers at Homerton University Hospital in east London have won sick pay after a long-running campaign.

The Unison and GMB unions have been demanding the same sickness pay for the cleaners, porters, caterers and other support staff as workers directly employed by the NHS.

But the battle goes on to bring the contract back in house from outsourcing giant ISS.

Its contract has been renewed for five years.

Sick pay will now include six months of full pay and six months' half pay.

Carol Shorter, a Unison union organiser, said, "Statutory sick pay is poverty pay and we are

pleased to see the back of it at Homerton hospital.

"This is a fantastic victory for our members who have fought hard against the inequalities of the two-tier workforce in the NHS.

"Unison will continue to campaign for full NHS terms and conditions for our members, and for these services to be brought back in-house."

Lola McEvoy, a GMB union organiser, said, "The use of statutory sick pay in hospitals like Homerton is not only cruel but dangerous.

"This battle has been gruelling, but buoyed by this win, the fight for fairness continues."

All outsourced workers should be brought back in house.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

New Tower Hamlets strikes

UP TO 1,500 council workers in east London are getting ready for their next series of strikes after their bosses ripped up their terms and conditions.

Unison union members in Tower Hamlets are set to strike on Thursday 13, Friday 14 and Monday 17 August.

This follows six days of walkouts in June and July over the Tower Rewards programme pushed on workers by the Labour council.

Mayor John Biggs forced new contracts on workers on 2 July.

The changes see workers receive less redundancy pay, flexitime and travel allowances—among other attacks.

Now is the time to strike.

Because of the Tory anti-union laws, the workers' strike ballot runs out on 20 August.



Back this battle

Workers should be preparing to win another overwhelming vote to strike, and prepare for a fourth round of walkouts to beat back the bosses.

●For updates go to towerhamlets.unison.site
●For a special issue of the Union branch newsletter about the dispute, go to bit.ly/TowPower

SOAS

Jobs battle vote at SOAS

AROUND 650 UCU and Unison union members at Soas university in central London are preparing to vote on strikes over attacks on their jobs.

University bosses are threatening hundreds of redundancies.

The Unison ballot opened on Tuesday this week.

UCU members are due to start voting on 10 September.

An online consultative ballot over the summer gives workers confidence they can win the argument for walkouts.

"I'm fairly confident with a bit of work we will win the ballot," Sandy Nicoll, Soas Unison branch secretary, told Socialist Worker.

"Unless Soas backs down on compulsory redundancies, I'm confident we can get a strong Yes vote and will strike in September," he said.

CIVIL SERVICE

Sign on for a DWP struggle

DEPARTMENT FOR Work and Pension (DWP) workers in the PCS union are to be consulted on taking industrial action over plans to lengthen working hours.

Tory ministers want jobcentres and Universal Credit service centres to open until 8pm Monday to Friday from 30 November.

Workers are already being driven to end home working. Now they also face extended periods of contact with people during a possible second wave of coronavirus.

DWP bosses can extend opening hours to 8pm under a pay deal wrongly agreed to by the PCS in 2016.

Bosses have to show they need to extend operating hours—and the PCS says there's no evidence for this.

The union is set to run a consultative ballot from 17 August to 7 September.

BIN WORKERS



Workers celebrate

PICTURE: WILLIE HOWARD

Bexley bin workers' victory

BIN WORKERS in Bexley, south east London, have hailed victory in their fight over pay and working conditions. The Unite union members were set to strike for five days, but have now accepted an improved offer from subcontractor Serco.

Unite says the deal includes £10.25 an hour minimum rate backdated to 1 April and a 2.75 percent pay rise for everyone already above the minimum rate.

Workers will have full sick pay, with no three day wait and a manager alleged to have bullied workers is no longer at the site.

Unite regional officer Ruth Hydon said, "I would like to thank our members for the solidarity they have shown.

"But the campaign is not over. Bexley council is currently considering whether to award the contract to Serco for a further five years up to 2025."

PROTESTS TAKE FIGHT TO TRUMP

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

DONALD TRUMP is stepping up his right wing threats as he tries to secure his presidency.

He suggested last week that he could try to postpone November's presidential election.

He tweeted, "With Universal Mail-in Voting, 2020 will be the most INACCURATE & FRAUDULENT Election in history."

With polls suggesting he will lose, Trump may be tempted to create a political crisis that could enable him to hold on longer.

But he is not all-powerful. After weeks of battling federal forces, protesters in Portland, Oregon, remain defiant.

Their resilience shows the power to defeat Trump.

More than 1,000 people protested outside the justice centre in Portland last Saturday night.

This was despite a claimed deal for federal troops to leave the area.

Workers in unions organised a "solidarity wall".



DEFIANCE ON the streets of Portland, Oregon, where Trump sent federal forces last month

Teachers were asked to wear red to the protest and health workers wore their scrubs.

"I'd rather be teaching, but as a movement right now this is showcasing what

teachers stand for," said Bryan Vazquez, a teacher from Washington State.

Albert Lee, a member of the Socialists of Colour group in the city told Socialist Worker,

"Portland protests were relatively peaceful and had a festival-like atmosphere.

"This changed when federal troops came to the city. People reacted to the

violence from them and now we won't back down."

Whole Food workers walked off the job in the city after management told them they were not allowed

to wear Black Lives Matter badges. And last Saturday firefighters organised a solidarity action.

The protests in Portland have won gains. Authorities have approved budgets that cut millions of dollars from the police.

Gains

But Albert said that these aren't the only gains. "When I and other socialists talked about police abolition or prison abolition, we were treated like those ideas were too radical," he said.

"But now that isn't the case, these ideas are seen as common sense."

He added, "Because of the coronavirus, people are struggling immensely. George Floyd's murder was a spark that highlighted the racism of the police."

"A whole range of inequalities are being tied together in these protests. People are seeing just how rigged the system is."

More on line
For more go to
www.socialistworker.co.uk

SEATTLE

Black Lives Matter movement has 'laid bare' systemic racism say protesters

PROTESTERS continue to turn out in Seattle, Washington State, with a new sense of urgency after Trump sent federal forces to the city.

"It does feel different because of the tension in Portland," said Tilmo who has been on the protests since they began.

Reforms

Protests in the city have won significant reforms.

The police are out of schools and the majority of city council members have generally pledged to slash police funding by half. The police force is also losing some of



Protesters march through Seattle

its duties. King County, which includes Seattle, has pledged to repurpose its jail for young people and close an old adult jail.

And the state's governor says he wants to ban police choke holds.

Inequalities

Frankie, a protester, told Socialist Worker that the protests are showing up some of the inequalities in the city.

"Seattle has a massive homelessness problem that's only been furthered by gentrification and wealth inequality," he said.

"I think that coupled with the coronavirus and

economic crisis. Once the Black Lives Matter protests began, it gave people a cause to stand for.

"But in the process, it has really laid bare the systematic issues we need to face in order to continue moving forward."

Meanwhile, protests in solidarity with Portland continue in other cities.

Andy is a member of the Democratic Socialists of America branch in Wichita, Kansas.

He told Socialist Worker that the protests in the city have been strong with "rallies for three nights in a row in solidarity with Portland".